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New York

President: Mr. Sareva ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 62 to 80 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Stagno Ugarte (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I can assure you that my delegation will support you unconditionally so that together we can achieve a successful outcome. I should like also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

My delegation fully supports the statement made by the delegation of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group.

Costa Rica considers that disarmament, demilitarization and the reduction of military spending constitute an important step towards peace. Reducing military arsenals limits opportunities to resort to violence and makes it possible to allocate greater resources to social development programmes.

Along these lines, we are gratified to note that achievements have been made in the Central American region in terms of reducing armed forces and military arsenals. Two States in the area have already abolished their armies — Costa Rica in 1948 and, more recently, Panama, in 1990.

The Nicaraguan proposal on a programme to limit and control arms in Central America, designed to bring about an appropriate balance of power and to promote stability, mutual confidence and transparency, which was adopted by the Central American presidents at the Belize summit on 4 September last, is yet another sign of our region's strong commitment to disarmament. In addition, the Treaty of Tlatelolco has already been ratified by all the States of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Despite the progress made in our region, we note with discouragement that the Disarmament Commission in Geneva is deadlocked; that there has been no progress in the implementation of the 13 steps towards nuclear disarmament agreed at the 2000 Review Conference for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); that there was no agreement in the working groups of the Disarmament Commission; and that no consensus was reached during the fourth special session devoted to disarmament.

We note with concern the deadlock in terms of disarmament in certain regions of the world. We urge States genuinely to commit themselves to disarmament negotiations and thus to achieve important agreements in this respect that will put them all on the path to genuine disarmament — including conventional weapons as well as weapons of mass destruction.

We urge States that possess nuclear weapons to take concrete and credible steps in terms of negotiating nuclear disarmament. We appeal to all States to renounce developing new nuclear weapons and to

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ratify the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In this context, we would like to highlight the fact that each article of the NPT is binding at all times and in all circumstances for the 188 States parties, and that the international community cannot tolerate anything less than full and strict compliance with these obligations. It seems unacceptable to us that a few States are preventing those treaties from becoming universal because they are giving priority to their particular interests over the general interest.

We should like to express our support for the two draft resolutions that will be presented by the New Agenda Coalition: "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: a new agenda", and "Reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons".

We would like to appeal to all delegations to support the draft resolution on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

My country is in favour of a complete ban on the transfer of weapons to all terrorist groups as well as to those groups and Governments that commit massive and systematic human rights violations or which flout international humanitarian law.

That is why the Government of Costa Rica, with a group of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Nobel Peace Prize winners and qualified lawyers, has drafted the framework for a convention on international arms transfers. The draft tries to adequately codify the obligations of States under existing international law, including humanitarian international law and human rights law, with regard to regulating arms transfers. We hope that it will become a model for internationally binding agreements that, once adopted by States, will open the way to concrete and concerted action to regulate arms transfers.

Multilateralism is the only avenue to general and complete disarmament. It is the basic principle of all disarmament negotiations and negotiations on non-proliferation. That is why Costa Rica reiterates its commitment to promoting the disarmament agenda.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Sir, I associate myself with previous speakers in congratulating you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and in wishing you every success. I also extend our congratulations to the Vice-Chairmen and the other members of the Bureau. We are confident that, with the cooperation of the Bureau, you will lead our Committee to success. My delegation will do its utmost to cooperate in order to achieve the desired objectives.

I also extend our thanks to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament for his commendable efforts in the service of disarmament, and for his comprehensive statement at the opening of the general debate, in which he touched upon various questions and issues on the Committee's agenda.

Everybody looks forward to a world free of the notorious weapons of mass destruction, a world in which successive generations live in peace and security, not threatened with total extinction by some extremist countries and terrorist groups, a world in which there is an end to the feverish arms race and the production and development of weapons of mass destruction that target humankind and its diverse cultures and social backgrounds.

We meet annually under this roof, most of us hoping to narrow the differences between us and arrive at agreed solutions to questions of international peace and security. Since we represent the peoples of the world, it is our humanitarian and moral duty to arrive at common formulas to save mankind from total annihilation by weapons of mass destruction. It is thoroughly regrettable that some States possessing such prohibited weapons still insist on keeping them and developing them. These States, especially the major Powers, want to monopolize such weapons but not allow their proliferation, under the pretext that this would potentially be devastating to mankind. It is a strange equation, which it is difficult to understand and accept. My delegation would like States possessing such weapons to voluntarily give them up, as South Africa did, setting an example in this regard. Possession of weapons of mass destruction is a kind of terrorism and muscle-flexing by States to subjugate neighbouring or competitor States. It is the worst thing developed by humankind, and has the potential to destroy all of us.

Regarding the threat of weapons of mass destruction, I refer agenda item 70, "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East." The region is in crisis due to the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories in Palestine and Syria and the resulting imbalance of power in favour of

Israel. As in previous sessions, at its fifty-seventh session the General Assembly urged all parties in the Middle East to consider seriously taking the practical and urgent steps required for the implementation of the proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The Assembly also called upon all countries of the region that have not yet done so to agree to place their nuclear activities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

All States in the area have responded positively to these proposals and acceded to the relevant conventions, except for the State of Israel; it is still outside the realm of accountability and international pressures exerted by the international community, which clearly deals selectively with some States and lacks true credibility. This double standard is totally unacceptable.

Since we are talking about the importance of eliminating weapons of mass destruction, I must state that chemical and biological weapons, small arms and light weapons, landmines and booby traps, all constitute a continuous threat to man, his survival and sustainable development. This is especially true if no control is exercised. There is an urgent need to focus on implementing the treaties relating to such weapons. We feel that this is very important, and we encourage all States to accede to the conventions governing their possession. We also call upon the States that manufacture such weapons not to abuse the loopholes in the treaties or items not covered by conventions.

Because of Qatar's commitment to international conventions and instruments, my Government decided in July 2003 to endorse Qatar's accession to the 1980 Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. We had already acceded to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction. We call upon all States that have not yet acceded to such treaties to promptly sign and accede to them in the service of United Nations purposes.

The principle of confidence-building should guide States and Governments in controlling the arms race. Mistrust and fear of others prompt States to compete against each other in pursuit of the most sophisticated modern weapons. My delegation feels that the best way to control the arms race is to seek solutions to intractable political problems in the world and to prevail upon contending parties to resort to dialogue and solve their problems politically as soon as possible, before situations deteriorate. We also believe that trust can be gained by giving priority to economic issues over political issues in areas of tension in the world. The attempt to link States to each other through strong economic relations enhances peace and security. The stronger the economic ties, the stronger the political relations.

Mr. Choisuren (Mongolia): I join previous speakers in extending my delegation's warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman, and, through you, to the other members of the Bureau. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you discharge your duties for the successful conclusion of the Committee's work.

I also take this opportunity to welcome Under-Secretary-General Nobuyasu Abe and wish him every success in his important new post.

To say that we are meeting at an important juncture in international relations does not fully convey the urgency of the problems confronting us. Global military expenditure is expected to greatly exceed the cold-war-era record, reaching an incredible $1 trillion, at a time when hunger and poverty continue to plague more than half of the world's population.

No progress has been made in reducing the arsenals of weapons of mass destruction and curbing their spread. Such weapons and the means of their delivery continue to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. The tragic events of 11 September 2001 highlighted the dangers that may arise from the spread of weapons of mass destruction, with the prospect that non-State actors and terrorist groups may have access to those horror weapons.

We consider that this is not the time to debate whether non-proliferation or global nuclear disarmament should be accorded the highest priority in our quest for a safer world, free from the fear of annihilation. A move in the right direction on both fronts would bring us closer to the cherished goal of general and complete disarmament. However, my delegation believes that at present the most important

task is to secure strict observance and effective implementation of all international disarmament agreements — first of all, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Without such a commitment and full compliance, the Millennium Declaration Goals of freeing peoples from the scourge of war and eliminating the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction will remain declarations of good intent.

My Government firmly believes that nuclear disarmament is the key not only to solving a wide range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues, but also to maintaining and strengthening international peace and security. In this context, my delegation attaches special importance to universal adherence to the NPT and preservation of its integrity. We share the view that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the foundation for further concerted efforts towards nuclear disarmament. We also underline the importance of achieving universality of the Treaty, and join others in calling upon those States outside the Treaty to accede to it as soon as possible. The creeping retreat from nuclear disarmament, to which a number of speakers have alluded, whether in the form of a revision of military doctrine that lowers the threshold for the possible use of nuclear weapons or of the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, should not erode the NPT's credibility and effectiveness.

In the light of recent challenges to the NPT and to the non-proliferation regime, our most urgent task now is to secure full compliance with, and universal adherence to, the Treaty, and to strengthen it. To demonstrate the seriousness of our commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the international community as a whole, and first and foremost the nuclear-weapon States, must take more concrete and practical steps. Any measure by the nuclear-weapon States aimed at the drastic reduction and eventual elimination of their nuclear arsenals would make a genuine and tangible contribution to the cause of disarmament. In this context, Mongolia attaches great importance to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the 13 steps adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which is rightly considered to be the blueprint to achieve nuclear disarmament.

In short, urgent measures to stop further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction should be taken, inspection regimes should be strengthened, and verification of the implementation of the relevant provisions of the disarmament treaties should be enforced rigorously.

Our delegation considers the international safeguards system, including the additional protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to be an important pillar of the global non-proliferation regime, and joins in the call on all States that have not done so to sign the protocol.

My country welcomes the entry into force of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions. Its implementation, representing the largest-ever reduction in nuclear forces, will be an important step towards nuclear disarmament.

In the opinion of my delegation, concrete measures could be taken, for a number of reasons, to develop a more effective control regime over tactical nuclear weapons and to reduce non-strategic nuclear weapons. According to a United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research study, tactical nuclear weapons are vulnerable to theft or unauthorized use because of their forward basing and frequently inadequate physical protection. They could become a very attractive target for non-State actors seeking to gain access. Possible measures to reinforce the control regime include reaffirmation by the United States and Russia of their continued commitment to their 1991-92 universal declarations; strengthening the informal tactical nuclear weapons regime by more legal instruments; and introducing transparency.

My delegation, like many others, would like to see the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and calls upon all States that have not yet become parties to the Treaty to accede to it as soon as possible. I refer in particular to those States whose ratification is required for the Treaty to enter into force.

My delegation attaches special importance to the negotiation of a universal and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Two years ago the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia proposed at a meeting of the Conference on Disarmament that, pending the negotiations on the

fissile materials cut-off treaty, the nuclear-weapon States should declare a moratorium on the production of weapons-grade fissile materials and promote greater transparency through disclosure of their present stocks. He also urged the United Nations to establish a register for all stocks of weapons-grade fissile material.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely reached among the States of the regions concerned constitutes an important non-proliferation measure, which enhances regional peace and security and promotes nuclear disarmament. The number of States covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones has now exceeded 100. My country warmly welcomed the five Central Asian States' agreement to conclude a treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. In conjunction with Mongolia's properly institutionalized nuclear-weapon-free status, this new treaty will establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in this vast and volatile region, thus making a valuable contribution to the cause of turning Central Asia into a zone of peace and predictability.

Mongolia, together with the relevant United Nations bodies, is working to find ways for the proper institutionalization of its nuclear-weapon-free status. I take this opportunity to thank Member States and relevant United Nations bodies for their steadfast support and assistance.

While there have been setbacks in priority areas of nuclear disarmament and related issues, progress has been made on a number of issues, such as the successful conclusion of the First Review Conference of the States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which now enjoys close to universal adherence. The destruction of declared stocks of chemical weapons is ongoing, and the verification regime of the CWC has demonstrated its credibility. Though the efforts to negotiate an instrument to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention have not been successful, the follow-up process raises hope that ways to improve compliance with the Convention can be developed.

Mongolia also welcomes the adoption of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, which we regard as an important initial step towards the creation of a legal norm in this field.

Increasing awareness of the danger of the excessive use of small arms and light weapons, with its devastating impact on national and human security, political stability and economic and social development, has prompted States to take concrete actions, individually and collectively, to implement the Programme of Action of the 2001 United Nations Conference on small arms. One important initiative related to this issue is the effort to establish an effective instrument to regulate and control the flow of small arms and light weapons. Launching the negotiation process to work out an international instrument for tracing small arms and light weapons could constitute an important breakthrough in preventing, combating and eliminating the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in small arms.

Before concluding, I would like to say that my delegation shares the view that the working methods of the Committee need streamlining, that we need a balanced agenda which faithfully reflects our priorities, and that our work should be focused on the most important goals which require immediate attention and action. In this context, we share the view that non-compliance with or inadequate implementation of existing arms control and Non-Proliferation Treaty regimes should be one the main issues the First Committee could deal with.

Mr. Meyer (Canada): Let me extend my warm congratulations on your election, Sir. You can count on our support in making this a most productive session.

As the General Assembly forum entrusted with consideration of security and disarmament issues, this Committee must acknowledge that the world is as full of challenges to the non-proliferation and disarmament order as it is of manifestations of the benefits that order has provided for humankind. As custodians of an edifice built up over decades, we must be vigilant in ensuring the integrity of the structure and its relevance to current conditions. This requires preventive maintenance, as well as the occasional renovation and new addition. There is no substitute, however, for the basic norms and commitments embodied in this multilateral structure. Without its shelter, we would all be more vulnerable to the blasts of the threat or use of force.

The challenges are evident. The withdrawal of a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a bitter setback to the enterprise to make that keystone of our nuclear-free construction a universal one. Similarly, it is discouraging to see States sacrifice their treasure to the

false gods of nuclear armament at the cost of human development or to consider devising new types of nuclear weapons and applications, rather than to concentrate on their progressive and systematic elimination. There is no escaping the reality that premising security on the existence of nuclear weapons is a dangerous approach, fraught with the risk of annihilation. The sooner we add nuclear arms to the scrap heap of weapons of mass destruction, the better. In addition to the dangers of State use of weapons of mass destruction, we must also now confront the risk of use by terrorists or other non-State actors. The only sure solution to this problem is ensuring the elimination of weapons of mass destruction according to international law.

At the same time, as we face up to the challenges, we should also recognize and celebrate the progress that has been registered in non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament forums since we last met in this Committee. There have been important new adherents to the central non-proliferation and disarmament conventions. We have witnessed the launch of a significant new Code Of Conduct to start addressing the major role that ballistic missiles play in our security environment. The second annual meeting of The Hague Code subscribers took place here only last week. United Nations Register of Conventional Arms experts agreed to substantial expansions of transparency with respect to conventional arms. There was great recognition of the human dimensions associated with small arms and light weapons at the First Biennial Meeting to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action, which revealed an impressive range of action at all levels and an exemplary partnership between Governments and civil society in coming to grips with this hydra-headed problem. A legal instrument under the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects to deal with the pressing issue of explosive remnants of war appears close at hand. A fifth meeting of States parties to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction revealed ever-growing support for the eradication of anti-personnel landmines. A constructive exchange on national practices relevant to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction occurred this summer and we expect to see further action to strengthen that critical prohibition at next month's annual meeting. There are even fresh signs of responsible compromise and an emerging consensus that would permit the Conference on Disarmament to resume productive work.

(*spoke in French*)

Without diminishing an iota from the seriousness of the threats and challenges to our enterprise that confront us, I think it is necessary to remind our publics and ourselves of the progress that is being made in domains affecting human security worldwide.

This Committee provides a unique opportunity for the entire membership to set out its views on the security and disarmament agenda of the day. This takes many forms, from national statements to interventions during thematic debate to formal resolutions. It is incumbent on those who value the importance of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament in global affairs to make optimal use of the time allotted to our work here. The First Committee can count on the support of my delegation in trying to reduce and rationalize the workload and to improve the quality and utility of the discussions during this session. We will have specific suggestions to put forward during our dedicated exchange on the Committee's working methods.

(*spoke in English*)

We hope to set an example in trying to minimize the "laundry list" nature of national statements in favour of providing more subject-specific commentary during the thematic debate. In this way, it may be possible to have a more meaningful discussion of key disarmament matters during our session and ideally to yield something richer than a litany of national positions or a mechanistic output of resolutions. In the end, we will be measured by action to achieve our common non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament goals, not by the number of resolutions adopted.

Canada is committed to playing an active role in promoting non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament across a wide spectrum of sectors. We are determined to strengthen the prohibitions against weapons of mass destruction, to reinforce the non-proliferation and disarmament regimes, to advance the

promising conventional arms control agenda and to contribute to the efficacy of United Nations and multilateral machinery in the entire field. We must squarely face up to the dangers that non-compliance poses to the integrity of our regimes and develop more effective measures to deter, detect and reverse such behaviour. In doing so, we must look to improve our compliance and verification mechanisms creatively, both within the treaty framework and in the broader United Nations context.

In addition to ensuring the efficacy of the existing instruments and measures, we will continue to explore possibilities for preventive diplomacy in the non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament realm to preclude the introduction of arms and adversarial attitudes into new environments. Outer space is one such realm, in which humanity has an increasing stake in maintaining a non-threatening, non-weaponized environment.

In all our endeavours, Canada will continue to forge partnerships with civil society and the private sector in realizing our common security goals. We live in a global village, in which insecurity in one quarter, if ignored, will eventually undermine security elsewhere. The widely held goals of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament will be fully realized only when we focus on international cooperation and our collective responsibility to implement and promote an effective, rules-based, multilateral security system.

Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The environment in which humankind lives is dynamic and mutable, but the principles and values that rule human nature are stable and permanent. Therefore, in the face of fear and challenges to its security, humankind has envisaged and elaborated various ways of protecting itself and of moving away from imperfect and fragile unilateral initiatives towards more complex mechanisms of defence, elaborated with the collective character of such problem in mind.

It is to that collective spirit that we must, while aware of the inherent limitations of unilateralism, appeal again today. Global security is indivisible, and therefore must be the responsibility of all.

To attempt to define the current political situation in terms of security is largely meaningless. The very fact that we are gathered here today clearly shows the need to perfect this multilateral framework for security; that perfection continues, unfortunately, to be elusive in many ways, whether in traditional areas or in terms of the new challenges that are appearing. We must take advantage of this forum to regain the spirit of compromise and the negotiating spirit through which we can revive the political will and determination which enabled us to agree on all the existing instruments, political will and determination which we seem to have lost.

It is contradictory to demand that the United Nations act, commit itself, supervise and monitor events, while denying it the necessary resources and tools. This contradiction explains to a considerable extent the deadlock in negotiations in the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament, which may well also occur in a possible special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. This deadlock is of great concern to Uruguay, because, in a world in which there is already talk of a second nuclear generation, it really means going backwards.

There is a similar deadlock with regard to the main legal instruments that we have created. The failure to achieve universality of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which remains the fundamental tool for denuclearization, and the delay in the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) seem to show that here at the United Nations we discuss topics that are not matters of priority or urgency. We all know that this is not right, and that it is imperative that we move forward to ensure that existing treaties are completely effective and fully observed. We must also renew the political will required for that to happen.

In that connection, Uruguay draws attention to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, which, although outside the United Nations ambit, has quickly been recognized as an important demonstration of political will. Through the Code, more than 100 countries, including Uruguay, have created a space in which to handle a topic whose importance does not have to be highlighted.

Uruguay's experience in its own region has been encouraging. We are members of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) zone of peace and part of the planet's first nuclear-weapon-free zone on the planet. We knew that these achievements were possible, because we believe that global security is possible; we have promoted it at the national, subregional and regional levels, and seek to do so at

the global level. This is why, as I said at the beginning of my statement, we appeal for a return to the spirit of compromise. We need to see how we can, together, consolidate a global disarmament and security system, which, after all, was one of the main purposes for which the United Nations was created.

Finally, I would like to say that Uruguay fully supports the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group, and that during this structured debate my country will intervene on behalf of MERCOSUR at appropriate times.

Mr. Biyira (Ghana): I am pleased to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to chair the First Committee at the fifty-eighth session. My delegation is confident that under your able leadership and guidance this session will come to a successful conclusion. You can count on the fullest cooperation of my delegation in the task ahead.

The proliferation of light weapons and illicit arms trafficking in the world today constitutes a grave menace to the stability, peace and sustainable development of Africa, particularly in the West African subregion. Although they do not in themselves cause the conflicts and criminal activities in which they are used, their wide availability, accumulation and illicit flows, especially in conflict zones, tend to escalate conflicts, undermine peace agreements, intensify violence, impede economic and social development and hinder the development of social stability.

According to available statistics, there are more than 500 million light weapons in circulation around the world, beyond the control of States, with 30 million of them in Africa and 8 million in West Africa alone. There are also an estimated 10,000 mercenaries on the African continent. The easy availability of small arms and mercenaries has helped generate and prolong conflict situations in West Africa.

My delegation believes that this problem should be addressed by tightening legal controls on the manufacture, transfer, dealing, brokering and possession of firearms and ammunition, including those in the possession of States. A useful approach would be to increase international transparency of the licit trade and to strengthen national legislation governing the arms trade and possession of weapons.

Now that the conflict in Liberia is under control, we should pay attention to the urgent need to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa, for nowhere have the damaging consequences of such weapons been felt more than in Liberia and the Mano River Union countries, where they have done so much harm to innocent people and property.

Ghana would like to cooperate with the international community in order to identify ways in which we can prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. Illicit brokering plays a key role in facilitating illegal transfers of arms to groups that are prevented from buying them legally — such as embargoed States and groups, insurgents, organized criminals and terrorists.

Arms-producing States should establish a formal register of arms brokers. We see a register as a very useful way of keeping arms brokers informed of their responsibilities. Also the ability to strike people or companies from the register would be a very strong signal to them that, wherever they are operating, Governments would be able to effectively monitor and control their activities to ensure that they are in the best interests of Africa's people.

My delegation participated in the United Nations First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July in New York. At this meeting, we reported on our national position and our efforts to curb this scourge to humanity. We agree with the Chairperson's summary that "The problem of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is multidimensional" and that it therefore "requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach covering all its thematic aspects, incorporating national, regional and global dimensions". (*A/CONF.192/BMS/2003/1, annex*)

My delegation is also proud to have been associated with the work of the 2003 Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation and further development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. For the first time since its establishment in 1992, the Group reached agreement on significant technical adjustments to some categories of conventional arms.

However, in spite of all efforts by the Government of Ghana to implement the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, much is yet to be achieved. We are therefore hopeful

that the international donor community will provide the necessary financial and technical assistance required to enable Ghana to fulfil its security and developmental obligations in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) subregion.

On regional disarmament, it is my delegation's view that since the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action in 2001 there has been a growing need for development of a regional perspective to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Consequently, regional initiatives, especially in Africa, have begun to take shape, with regional organizations taking a comprehensive approach in dealing with issues of mutual concern, including ways and means to combat terrorism, transnational crimes and trafficking in drugs.

Non-nuclear-weapon States continue to make compromises and to take concrete steps aimed at achieving the universality of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and at giving credence to its provisions. Since the NPT Review and Extension Conference of April 1995, the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, established by the Pelindaba Treaty, has become a reality, as has the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, established by the Bangkok Treaty. Those two treaties, together with the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Treaty of Rarotonga and the Antarctic Treaty, have prepared the ground for a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere, which we hope will be supported and respected by all, including the nuclear-weapon States, in order to safeguard the NPT's credibility and integrity. We hope that, in the very near future, all other countries will take practical steps to establish their own nuclear-weapon-free zones in pursuit of the objectives of the NPT, which we share with almost all the States of the region. That will make the world a safe and more secure place for all of us to live in.

Mr. Baichorov (Belarus): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus, I congratulate you, Sir, upon your election to the post of Chairman of the First Committee. You can count on our support and cooperation as you carry out your work.

This year, the international authority of the United Nations was seriously tested by events in Iraq. Small and vulnerable States' confidence in the United Nations system was not strengthened. Furthermore, trends towards the intensification of international tension in various regions, accompanied by a decreased United Nations role in conflict resolution, resulted in the accelerated formation and consolidation of regional and subregional military-political alliances and organizations. Many States now consider participation in such alliances to be a prerequisite for their security.

Today, the system of international relations in the context of international security, arms control and disarmament is going through a period of crisis and needs to be reformed.

In this connection, the Belarusian delegation supports the proposals of the United States and other nations with regard to the need to adapt the First Committee's agenda to new realities, on the basis that the United Nations, as the leading universal international Organization, should elaborate a clear-cut list of top priorities for the maintenance of international security and generate programmes to overcome concrete problems and real threats to mankind. Resolutions that are adopted should contain direct instructions to existing forums and structures in the field of international security, arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. That is the only way in which we can prevent the devaluation of notions such as peace, security and stability, and truly make our world more secure.

We believe that a positive approach by the First Committee could revive the activity of a number of forums in the field of arms control and disarmament. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a most important instrument providing the international community with a consistent programme of action in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Belarus supports the active work of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference.

The Republic of Belarus supports the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We welcome the conclusions of the Vienna Conference on facilitating its entry into force which gave a new political impulse to the process of ratifying the Treaty and to the consolidation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Belarus calls upon all States which are not yet parties to the CTBT to accede to it without delay. We welcome, in particular, the intention of China to continue its ratification process.

One of the most important issues is the prohibition of the production of fissile material for

nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. The Conference on Disarmament must start negotiations on this problem as soon as possible.

The military use of outer space should also be subject to international legal regulation. The international community must ban the deployment of offensive weapons in space.

Belarus believes that the process of nuclear disarmament must be complemented by concrete steps to consolidate the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Those steps should include strengthening existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and setting up new ones.

The Republic of Belarus is pursuing a responsible and consistent foreign policy aimed at fulfilling its international commitments, including its commitments under the NPT, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, the Open Skies Treaty, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Intermediate-Range and Short-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Last year, Belarus joined other States in adopting the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC). We would now like to see the establishment of a relationship between HCOC and the United Nations in order to explore more comprehensive approaches to address this problem.

Proof of the consistency of our policy is further shown by the fact that the Republic of Belarus recently deposited with the Secretary-General instruments of accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention. In compliance with the Convention's provisions, our country has to destroy its landmine stockpiles within four years. Belarus requires considerable financial and technological resources to ensure the elimination of more than 4 million anti-personnel mines, inherited after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Before acceding to the Convention, Belarus had on its own destroyed more than 100,000 landmines.

It should be noted that conventional anti-personnel mines can be disposed of either by incineration or by open detonation; however, because of ecological concerns, those methods cannot be applied to mines containing liquid explosives — and we have 3.6 million. Under these circumstances, we appeal to Governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations to assist the Republic of Belarus in its stockpile elimination effort. All technical, technological and financial assistance will be warmly welcomed.

Belarus supports the expansion of transparency measures in armaments, and regularly submits data to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We also submit information about the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, in accordance with resolution 56/24 V, entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects".

We attach special importance to developing confidence-building measures at the regional and bilateral levels, as that is one of the priorities of our foreign policy. The Republic of Belarus has made an important contribution to the consolidation of regional security by implementing a strategy aimed at setting up a belt of good-neighbourliness, important components of which are agreements on complementary confidence- and security-building measures.

In conclusion, I express my hope that the international community will develop reliable mechanisms to counter new risks and threats to our common security. Having demonstrated more than once its adherence to a comprehensive disarmament policy, the Republic of Belarus will continue to remain an active participant in this process.

Mr. Musambachime (Zambia): My delegation is particularly happy to see you, Sir, Ambassador of Finland, with which Zambia enjoys close relations, presiding over the Committee's deliberations during the fifty-eighth session. I congratulate you on your well-deserved election as Chairman. Given your professional skills and dedication to the work of the Committee, I am confident that you will steer that work to a successful conclusion.

I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, in whom I have great confidence. My delegation pledges to be at their full disposal as they perform their duties.

I note that the fifty-eighth session of our Committee should draw a lot of lessons from the work of the fifty-seventh session. That is as it should be, since knowledge is a cumulative phenomenon. My

delegation, Sir, therefore wishes to commend your predecessor, Mr. Matiya Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka of Uganda, for the manner in which he led the work of the Committee during the fifty-seventh session. His achievements are a strong foundation on which the current session should build.

I welcome and congratulate Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe on his appointment as the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. I am confident that, given his vast experience and diplomatic skills, Ambassador Abe will consolidate the achievements of the former Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, in promoting global disarmament.

Over the past four years, threats to international peace and security have been exacerbated not only by the failure of the international community to prevent potential conflicts, but to a large extent by the inability of the disarmament machinery to reach consensus on a comprehensive agenda for disarmament. As stated by Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe in his opening statement at this session, both the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament failed to agree on recommendations and programmes of work, respectively, for the year 2003.

My delegation had hoped that the Commission would make progress in its efforts to find ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. For very similar reasons, the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament ended the first part of its 2003 session on 28 March without being able to agree on a programme of work. The problem confronting those two disarmament bodies were exacerbated by the use of force in international relations and the lack of universal support for multilateralism and, indeed, for the relevance and role of the United Nations. In the past year, the two disarmament bodies have watched hopelessly as global military expenditures rose to cold-war peak levels of over $1 trillion a year.

My delegation hopes that this Committee will enhance the package proposal by the Ambassadors of Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Sweden aimed at undoing the deadlock. Accordingly, Zambia supports the proposed creation of four ad hoc committees on negative security assurances; a session on the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament; a ban on the production of fissile materials; and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The proposed special coordinators on radiological weapons and on a comprehensive programme of disarmament, including on transparency in armaments, would enhance the work of the ad hoc committees that was contained in the package proposal by the Ambassadors. Given the challenges facing global disarmament, my delegation fully agrees with the proposed package, which my Government considers to be a very significant outcome of the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

There is no doubt that the picture I have painted has affected the entire international security regime, architecture and arrangements. The international collective security architecture, built and strengthened over the decades, now offers just a minimum veneer of security. In fact, all countries stand vulnerable to one form of threat or another. Unfortunately, collectively, we are unable to escape to safety. To do so will require concerted universal efforts to strengthen existing security regimes and arrangements. There is a need, as proposed by the group of concerned ambassadors in the Conference on Disarmament, to build new security regimes to address emerging threats to international peace and security.

My delegation firmly believes that all is not lost. There are opportunities within the context of multilateralism to strengthen the existing international security regimes. A new regime would address threats arising from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In order for the disarmament and non-proliferation agendas to succeed, the international community must strengthen the existing monitoring and enforcement arrangements that were foreseen in all the disarmament agreements and conventions, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Guaranteeing the world a stable international environment requires the primary role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security to be recognized, strengthened and supported by all Member States. It is therefore only the United

Nations that can comprehensively monitor and verify compliance with the international agreements and conventions on which the international security architecture currently rests. Furthermore, a strengthened Security Council has a greater capacity for confidence-building in all areas where threats to peace exist.

Through the United Nations as a whole, it is possible to effectively prevent terrorists from gaining access to weapons of mass destructions, including the rampant misuse of small arms and light weapons. The United Nations, acting through both the General Assembly and the Security Council, can give hope and save lives and property around the world.

My delegation wishes to reaffirm the role of the First Committee and the United Nations in general in strengthening the existing international security regimes architecture and arrangements. Zambia reaffirms that nuclear-weapon-free zones and the regional disarmament centres contribute to peace and stability.

My delegation sees a future in calling for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to facilitate a comprehensive review of the existing international security architecture and arrangements. A successful outcome to the special session could, once again, recreate the atmosphere of hope for peace and development in the kind of secure environment that the world was beginning to experience at the end of the cold war.

In conclusion, Zambia is prepared to participate actively in the efforts to make the First Committee more effective. The improvements in the First Committee's working methods should be undertaken in an inclusive, consultative and transparent manner, with all stakeholders in the domain of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): At the outset, I would like to associate myself with the remarks of congratulation, recognition and support made by our chief representative in disarmament affairs, Ambassador Duarte, at the beginning of this debate.

The First Committee opens its work at a time when political uncertainty and security concerns plague the armed and the unarmed alike. There are solid grounds today for anxiety about the future of the international order. Sadly, recent events can only add to our worries. The world today faces daunting threats, or, as Secretary- General Kofi Annan has accurately pointed out, old threats in dangerous combinations.

Brazil concurs with the assessment that terrorism and the prospects of the further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are prominent among contemporary threats to international peace and security. One of the most terrifying possibilities is that non-State actors might acquire and use such weapons. We must endeavour to prevent that from ever happening, while acting within accepted principles and norms of international law.

No less challenging, however, is the lack of progress, even setbacks, in the field of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament. We are seriously disappointed at signs of lack of interest in achieving concrete progress within the multilateral framework, despite multiple expressions of commitment to action.

Equally disquieting is the recent trend of shunning the multilateral approach to issues that are in essence universal. "Unfortunately, there are also worrisome signs," stated President Lula in the general debate, "of an attempt to discredit the Organization and even to divest the United Nations of its political authority." (*A/58/PV.7, p. 5*) Given the need for transparency, stability and predictability, questions of disarmament and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are more appropriately dealt with on a multilateral basis and in a treaty-based framework.

Internationally negotiated multilateral disarmament treaties have made, and should continue to make, a fundamental contribution to peace and security. In this regard, we are worried by emerging academic approaches that assume that the world now lives in a new, unique strategic scenario, and thus propose to revise the foundations of the disarmament and non-proliferation structure built by the international community over the past three decades.

The fabric of the world order depends on full observance of commitments freely undertaken. Strict compliance by all States parties with the obligations entered into in the major instruments concerning weapons of mass destruction, as well as universal adherence to them, is the sole possible assurance of a more stable and safe world. In this connection, Brazil considers the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be a key component of the international security architecture. Its universalization

and full compliance with all its provisions by all parties, including through the 13 practical steps adopted by consensus in 2000, are central to our commitment to strengthen this Treaty.

We call upon Israel, India and Pakistan to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States and to place their nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reconsider the announcement of its intention to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and upon Iran to cooperate fully and immediately with the International Atomic Energy Agency, in resolving issues arising from the implementation of their obligations. With the same emphasis, we urge the speedy fulfilment of the commitments undertaken by the nuclear-weapon Powers under article VI of the NPT.

Strengthening the non-proliferation regime does not preclude disarmament measures leading to the complete elimination of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, measures for which there is a pressing need. Non-proliferation alone will not dispel common security concerns, as the supply-side control of key technologies associated with the development of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is an important tool for combating their spread. However, care must be exercised, lest peaceful programmes in developing countries are arbitrarily curtailed. Without effective, verifiable and irreversible progress in the field of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, there can be little, if any, reliable and sustainable results deriving from non-proliferation regimes.

The notion of compliance encompasses that of progress. In our view, nuclear disarmament is a fundamental pre-requisite for a consistent and coherent policy for curbing proliferation. But instead of nuclear disarmament, or at least more vigorous signs of willingness to fulfil the unequivocal undertaking agreed in 2000, we notice recent approaches favouring a broader role for nuclear weapons as part of security strategies, including new rationalizations for the use and development of new types of such weapons.

At the same time, the concept of proliferation has been somewhat blurred by efforts to confine it to the horizontal dimension, losing sight of the ever growing threat posed by the technological upgrade of weaponry — the vertical dimension of proliferation. This opens up the abhorrent prospect of the continuing development of new nuclear arms. Some of the current strategic doctrines raise the possibility of their use against non-nuclear States, even in conventional scenarios. This would open the door to what hitherto has been conceived as unthinkable, as it would lower the threshold of the actual use of nuclear weapons in war.

The threat of international terrorism and the possibility that weapons of mass destruction will fall into the hands of non-State actors highlight the need for the total elimination of those weapons. This is the only sure way to prevent non-State actors from acquiring them. The complexity of the debate on this issue should not excuse the retention of weapons of mass destruction by the States that possess them.

The continued paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament is an example of lack of interest and absence of political will. A deadlocked Conference on Disarmament is to no one's benefit. Brazil regards as imperative the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament.

Brazil firmly supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Given its non-discriminatory nature and universal scope, this Treaty represents a welcome improvement over the asymmetries prevailing in other instruments. Countries that have yet to sign and ratify it, particularly those whose ratification is necessary for its entry into force, must clearly indicate their readiness to accede to the Treaty. This political sign becomes even more important as the prospect of its early entrance into force should guide the setting up of the Treaty's International Monitoring System. There can be no formal verification regime without legally binding obligations in place.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are a powerful tool to fulfil the aspiration of all peoples to a nuclear-weapon-free world. The establishment of additional such zones and the consolidation of existing ones should be actively encouraged. The five nuclear-weapon States are expected to undertake appropriate binding obligations towards such zones, and they would do well to review their reservations to the attached protocols, as in the case of the Tlatelolco Treaty.

Brazil considers the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to be of major relevance. Its implementation, however, must be conducted in strict accordance with the principles negotiated with so much hard work. We are particularly concerned over the indication that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will not be able to comply with the Convention deadline for the total destruction of existing stocks of chemical weapons. We urge possessor States parties to ensure the destruction of their arsenals, without conditions or parallelisms, in a timely manner. We also expect the CWC verification regime to remain fair and non-discriminatory. Finally, we regret that, six years after the Convention's entry into force, the States parties have yet to reach agreement on how to regulate one of its critical provisions — cooperation for peaceful purposes.

Acting against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is among Brazil's priorities. The conclusions of the First Biennial Meeting to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted in 2001 were encouraging. Because of the relevance of the critical issue of tracing and marking, we consider that the international community should be prepared to adopt a legally binding instrument.

The shadow of threats to peace and security looms large at present, as the Security Council remains divided. Negotiations on disarmament and related areas are stagnating, if not moving backwards, and there are growing doubts about the political fate of the General Assembly, including the First Committee.

Nevertheless, as we review the recently concluded general debate in the General Assembly Hall and read once more the highly apposite and interesting report of the Secretary-General on the millennium decade, more encouraging trends in some key areas may also be identified. First, seldom in recent history has world public opinion given so much attention and support to the United Nations and to the values of peace, security and democracy. Secondly, there is wide agreement that the principle of multilateralism plays a central, active international role and that the United Nations serves as a needed centre for harmonizing the actions of nations, as foreseen in our Charter. Thirdly, it is now recognized that there is a compelling need to reactivate all the United Nations political mechanisms so that it may fully discharge its mandate in the field of international peace and security. Finally, to that end the proposed United Nations reform and the revitalization of the General Assembly represent historic opportunities which must be explored in depth with a view to concrete action.

In that context, it should be recalled that the Charter entrusts the General Assembly with well-defined functions and powers as regards not only disarmament and arms regulation, but also peace and security and the promotion of international political cooperation, on the understanding that the prerogatives of other principal organs of the United Nations must be fully preserved. Such a mandate has direct implications for the work of the First Committee, as the General Assembly plenary is burdened with heavy institutional and policy tasks.

Better use could be made of provisions of paragraph 4 of Article 1, paragraph 1 of Article 11 and paragraph 1.a of Article 13 of our Charter. In our view, there is room for reorganizing our agenda in a coherent, methodical way. The prevailing exclusion of some items from consideration detracts from the effectiveness of the First Committee.

In other political circumstances, this situation might have been tolerated, but today it should lead to a collective process of reflection and deliberation directed at identifying means for strengthening the multilateral approaches to political and security affairs, as well as at considering possible recommendations on the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security and on the promotion of international cooperation in the political field, as foreseen in the Charter. For sure, there will be a plurality of views on this matter. My delegation will be ready to discuss them both in this Committee and in plenary.

Brazil is totally committed to our disarmament agenda, but holds the view that the political and security potentialities of this body have not yet been put to full use. The First Committee should be repoliticized and our agenda and methods of work reorganized. This indispensable task is long overdue.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election and in assuring you of our complete cooperation as you guide the Committee's work this year. I take this occasion also to convey the Holy See's continuing appreciation for the work for peace done year after year in this United Nations setting.

If it seems impossible to have nations lay down their arms in the present set of international relationships, perhaps the reason is because we have not made sufficient preparations to give States and their leaders the assurance that security can be obtained without the never-ending development and production of arms. This means that the conditions for peace must be built first before we can enjoy the fruits of peace. The soil must be nourished before the blossom appears.

That is why the work done by the United Nations and its agencies in building a culture of peace is so important. If we are to aspire to general and complete disarmament, we must first show respect for life and the dignity and human rights of individuals; reject violence; promote freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and the acceptance of differences; and develop better understanding and harmony between ethnic, religious, cultural and social groups. This agenda is indeed vast, but if the world community does not embrace it, we will continue to suffer the ravages of war.

The main purpose of the United Nations — to maintain international peace and security — can be realized in many different ways, for it is a purpose threatened and challenged on many fronts. In his address at the opening of this session of the General Assembly, Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke of the "hard" and "soft" threats to peace faced by the United Nations. Among the hard threats are terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, while the soft threats include the persistence of extreme poverty, the disparity of income between and within societies, the spread of infectious diseases, and environmental degradation. Both types of threats are real and must be recognized by all States.

Moreover, the Secretary-General emphasized that the United Nations does not have to choose to confront one to the exclusion of the other. Indeed, the United Nations cannot do so. This need and concern for a comprehensive view of international peace and security are fully shared by the Holy See, as evidenced primarily by its teachings on the nature of the human person, human dignity and a just social order. It is from that starting point that my delegation has always addressed this Committee.

The specific focus of the First Committee is on disarmament matters, usually considered hard threats to be handled by a number of multilateral initiatives and agreements. The importance of dialogue, negotiation, diplomacy and reference to the rule of law in these proceedings cannot be overestimated. Though we have mediation and verification techniques embodied in international law, they are not being sufficiently utilized, and thus nations lapse into war. The steady application of the rule of law must be supported as the means to peace rather than constant recourse to militarism. In this regard, this Committee has a prominent role to play in insisting on standards to curb the excesses of weaponry. Such work is a direct contribution to building the conditions of peace.

Small arms ought to occupy our immediate attention, for small arms and light weapons kill more than half a million people each year. To fully address the small arms problem, there must be greater recognition that domestic laws and international policies are interdependent and that the legal and illegal markets for small arms are interrelated. Many illicit transfers start out as legal ones. In this regard, my delegation reiterates its view that attention should be focused on two important issues: State responsibility for illicit transfers and a legally-binding agreement on the international arms trade.

The vast majority of cold-war arms-control thinking relied on the concept of mutual assured destruction. Everyone knows that this deterrence concept was based on a terrifying foundation — that one bloc's security can be defended by threatening the annihilation of the other bloc's population. The horrible prospect of global nuclear warfare was thought to be enough to ensure some form of peace and security, while over time bilateral and multilateral agreements alike sought to reduce that possibility by encouraging and verifying the reduction of nuclear weapons in the world. This was made concrete in one particular case by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The end of the cold war should have seen the end of policies of mutually assured destruction, which held the world in fear, but events over the past year have led to a certain resurgence in such thinking. With it has come a real weakening of the NPT regime and of multilateral efforts for disarmament and non-proliferation. By exploiting certain loopholes in the NPT and engaging in covert proliferation activities, some States are once again banking their security on the possession and threatened use of nuclear weapons. Those steps should be alarming to everyone. As my

delegation has insisted on many previous occasions, nuclear weapons are incompatible with peace in the twenty-first century.

As Governments prepare for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the question of proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects must be addressed. In the new age of terrorism that the world has sadly entered — in which the fear of a terrorist attack with nuclear devices is present — the world community must give life to the following words, contained in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and agreed by all States parties to the Treaty:

> "the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons." (*NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Parts I and II), p. 15*)

The other weapons of mass destruction — chemical and biological weapons — also present serious problems. As with the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, many chemical and biological agents are used for legitimate and even beneficial purposes, but some can be easily converted into weapons-grade material, only to be bought, sold and transported without detection. Multilateral inspection agencies — such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, for nuclear materials, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, for chemicals — are vital to ensuring compliance and verification, and the lack of such an agency for the Biological Weapons Convention needs to be remedied quickly. Stringent export controls on the part of States that produce such materials would help to stem illicit transfers and to hold States more accountable for licit ones.

It is an unfortunate fact that many arms control treaties contain loopholes and weak points in terms of compliance, verification and enforcement. None of those weaknesses should, however, divert our attention from the seriousness of the threats posed by these weapons. Taking stronger enforcement measures — perhaps by developing interdiction agreements and policies among States — may be one way of making sure that international law is upheld and vindicated.

Making transparent, verifiable and irreversible reductions in offensive weapons is the most direct approach to disarmament. At the same time, however, multilateral security assurances in line with changing geopolitical realities among States and — perhaps most important — internal political reforms have been shown to eliminate the need for such weapons in the first place.

All the steps that must be taken in the disarmament process may seem overwhelming at times. But perhaps they are not so daunting if they are seen within the context of building a culture of peace, with a view to combating both the hard and soft threats to our collective peace and security and guaranteeing the survival of humanity. What is essential to fulfil the peace agenda is to change the attitude of both States and individuals. We must realize that violence is not the inevitable lot of mankind. We have already constructed the broad framework of international law and have, in the United Nations, the political instrument to implement that law.

The knowledge of the gains already achieved by humanity should fill us with hope that recourse to violence and war can be overcome by renewing a political commitment to a multilateralism based on the values of responsibility, solidarity and dialogue. The steady application of disarmament steps can indeed light the way forward.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands on a point of order.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): As this is the first time I have taken the floor in the plenary debate — although this is not a statement — I congratulate you, Sir, on your election and express my delegation's full confidence in your ability to bring the current session of the First Committee to a successful completion.

I raise a point of order to ask a question. It is now 11.30, which means that this morning we will lose one and a half hours of precious meeting time. Is that necessary, and if so, why? If I am correct, the list of speakers was closed some time ago, so the Chairman and the secretariat must be aware of all the speakers on it. It would be logical to continue to work on the basis of the list and to solicit as many speakers as possible during every part of our session.

The Chairman: I was about to touch upon the fact that this morning's list of speakers has now been exhausted.

Let me provide an answer. The list of speakers was closed on Monday night. In the light of the meetings on Monday and Tuesday, when it became

clear that member States unfortunately were not abiding by the time limit requested — 10 minutes for delegations speaking in their national capacity and 15 minutes for Member States speaking on behalf of several Member States or groups of Member States — we sensed a need to have one more meeting to see how we would proceed in terms of time management.

Today's meeting has proved that the duration of statements made by member States varies greatly. It would be very easy to plan ahead if the Bureau and the secretariat had a definite idea whether member States would abide by the request. Of course, it is ultimately the sovereign right of member States to exceed the time limit they are asked to observe. But I think that today's meeting shows that in the days ahead we will probably be able to plan better in terms of our time management.

I was about to announce, first, that, in the light of the list of speakers as it stands now, it is very likely that we will not need Friday next week; only one speaker is currently inscribed on the list of speakers for that day. Secondly, there are currently only eight speakers on the list for Thursday next week. At its meeting yesterday, the Bureau agreed that the secretariat would be asked to find out from those currently inscribed on the list of speakers for both Thursday and Friday next week, 16 and 17 October, whether they would be flexible and consider being moved ahead to another date when space seemed to be available. That will be done. Unfortunately, we were unable to do it for this morning's meeting.

Also, yesterday there were a few cancellations by speakers who had inscribed themselves on the list for yesterday, and we were not sure whether they would be moved to today or to a later date. It was not today, and therefore we ended up having only 10 speakers on the list.

This is not an exact science, and never could be, unless we knew in advance that all member States would be speaking for a certain duration. But, as I have said, we will be working on trying to make our future meetings utilize the time available more fully. The cooperation and flexibility of those member States currently inscribed on the two dates I have noted will be essential.

This brings me to another point. As I indicated at our organizational meeting, it is the intention of the Chair to convene an informal exchange of views on our working methods and general housekeeping issues, if I may use that expression, on the cusp, between the end of the general debate and the start of the thematic second phase of our work. That cusp will most likely fall towards the end of next week — certainly Friday, but, depending on how this reshuffling works out, possibly as early as Thursday. Unfortunately, I cannot now indicate exactly when it will take place — whether on Thursday or Friday. But we will certainly make every effort to have the Committee be in a position to use its time and resources in a most efficient and ultimately effective manner.

I am aware that today's meeting will fall short of the time allotted, and am somewhat unhappy about that. Having said that, I encourage delegations to use the remaining hour or more for bilateral, trilateral or multilateral consultations.

I hope that my answer was satisfactory to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): My only remaining doubt is over how flexible we are. Can we not have a number of reserve speakers, ready to speak if called upon whenever we have time left, with interpreters and everything else being paid for? Can there be more flexibility? Are there countries prepared to speak earlier because they are already in a position to do so? Those are questions that I feel have not yet been completely answered.

The Chairman: We should indeed explore what the representative of the Netherlands suggests. The Chair feels that ideally for this part of our housekeeping we should have a running list of speakers for the whole duration of the general debate. Whether that would be feasible, I cannot tell. One of the reasons for convening for an informal exchange of views is to explore exactly those kinds of questions. Whether we could have a reserve or running list of speakers is a matter on which the Bureau and the secretariat will be in the hands of member States. For that reason, I think it is important that we have an open exchange of views on our housekeeping issues toward the end of next week — an exchange of views with no preconceptions. I will request the secretariat to make soundings to that effect.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.